

Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge

Land Conservation Planning Study, Planning Update 4



With the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge expansion the Service can protect important estuary and wetland habitat to aid in the recovery of the federally-listed endangered Koloa Maoli (Hawaiian Duck). Photo: Brenda Zaun, USFWS.

Aloha

This is the final Planning Update from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announcing the decision to expand the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), Kaua'i County, Hawai'i.

Availability of the Planning Documents

The LCP/EA and the FONSI are available on the Service's website <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning> or at the Refuge's headquarters.

Appendix D of the LCP/EA includes the comments we received on the LCP/EA during the public comment period held May 15 to June 15, 2007. The Service's responses to comments are included as well.

In This Issue:

Area and Public Access Maps.....page 5
Contacts.....page 6

The Final Decision

The Service has decided to adopt and implement Alternative D, the Preferred Alternative, as described in the *Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge Land Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment* (LCP/EA). Under the selected alternative, the Service will seek to expand the Refuge by 202 acres. The decision is documented in a Finding of No Significant

Impact (FONSI). This decision concludes the Refuge expansion planning process. The Service and landowners within the expansion area who are interested in selling their land or an interest in their land, such as an easement, or pursuing other forms of conservation activities, can now work together to protect priority habitats. Habitat conservation is dependent upon the availability of funding.

Results of Public Review

The purpose of public outreach was to identify and analyze the public's perspective on the proposed expansion, management, and alternatives being considered for protecting the expansion area as legislated under the Kilauea Point Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act of 2004

(Expansion Act). In addition to the public comments voiced at the open house, the Service received written comments in the form of letters and e-mail messages. A brief summary of public comments and Service responses, organized by subject area, is provided on the following pages. →

Results of Public Review continued . . .

Support for expanding the Refuge under Alternative D.

The Service received many comments supporting Alternative D as the best choice for protecting the coastal and riverine habitats identified for protection in the Expansion Act. Commenters supported Alternative D because it will protect coastal habitat from development; protect lowland stream environments and freshwater habitats; and preserve remaining natural areas and native plants and animals, especially seabirds and endangered species. Some commenters supported Alternative D for public recreational activities on these lands.

Service response: Comments noted. We appreciate the support.

Opposition to expanding the Refuge. One comment described the area as low use, with minimal impacts by local people and tourists, concluding that Refuge expansion is unnecessary. The commenter explained further that development is not a threat under private ownership because the parcels are designated by the County as Special Management Areas (SMA), there are no big development plans, and the area is controlled by the citizens of Kaua'i, local residents, the Kilauea Neighborhood Association, the County, and Kaua'i Public Land Trust. One major reason the commenter opposed the Refuge expansion is concern that the only access provided would be on Service run tours. The commenter disagreed with using albatross as a justification for the Refuge expansion.

Service response. Development plans have been pursued in this area. Fragile habitats and sensitive wildlife species can be threatened by development through destruction of habitat and interaction with invasive species such as cats, rats, pigs, and non-native plants. Numerous wildlife species have been completely eliminated since human arrival on Kaua'i, and human caused threats to wildlife continue. The State of Hawai'i leads the nation in the number of federally listed endangered species, most of which are on the list due to human activities.

The Service has no plans to close public access. Access to the beach from the two dedicated County right-of-way roads will continue to be provided. Should the area be developed by private landowners, public access to developed areas would most likely be prohibited.



High priority habitats could be protected in the expansion area for the endangered 'Ilio-holo-i-ka-uaua (Hawaiian monk seal) and Honu (Green sea turtle). Photos: USFWS.

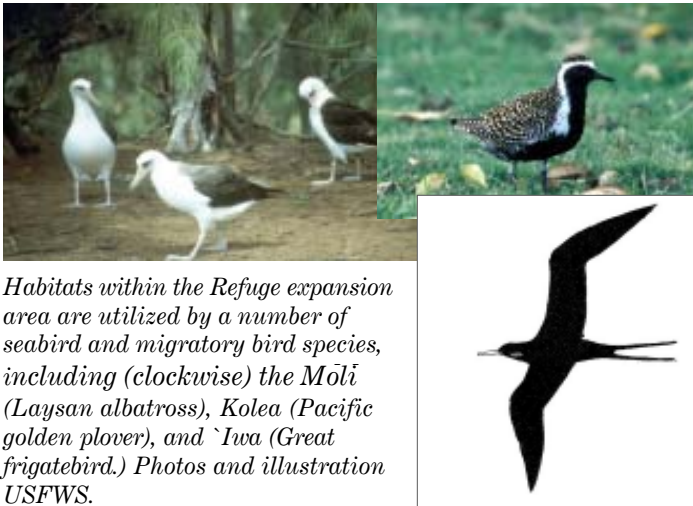
Albatross are present in the area, but are not endangered, and were not used as a justification for Refuge expansion. Protecting habitat for the endangered Hawaiian stilt, Hawaiian duck, Hawaiian coot, Hawaiian gallinule, Hawaiian goose, monk seal, and green sea turtle were used as partial justification for the Refuge expansion.

Land acquisition program. Commenters asked how the Service would finance land purchases within the expansion area and ensure limited public money is spent.

Service response. The Service would seek to purchase lands within the Refuge expansion area from willing sellers with monies appropriated by Congress under the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and would pursue other sources of funding as well. Federal law requires the Service to offer landowners fair market value for their land based on a professional real estate appraisal completed in accordance with the Uniform Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions. The appraisal is reviewed by an Interior Department Review Appraiser to insure all purchase offers properly reflect the sale prices of comparable properties in the vicinity.

Fencing the Refuge. Several commenters did not want the Service to fence the boundaries of Kilauea Valley, which would interfere with property owners view easements in the Kilauea Agricultural Subdivision.

Service response. The Service does not intend to fence the Refuge expansion boundaries unless it is necessary to protect Refuge resources (e.g., prevent dogs from killing wildlife).



Habitats within the Refuge expansion area are utilized by a number of seabird and migratory bird species, including (clockwise) the Mōlī (Laysan albatross), Kolea (Pacific golden plover), and `Iwa (Great frigatebird.) Photos and illustration USFWS.

Wildlife conservation and archeological sites. One commenter encouraged the Service to increase the bat population. A few commenters wanted to see the Service make a strong commitment to identifying and protecting cultural, historic, and archeological sites.

Service response. The Service will specifically address the management of bat habitat in the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). Planning for the CCP is scheduled to begin in Spring 2008. The Service will likely design specific management strategies to benefit Hawaiian bats and their habitat, such as protecting old coconut trees with hanging dead leaves, favorite roosting areas for endangered Hawaiian hoary bats.

The Service will comply with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and other cultural resource preservation laws, and consult with the State Historic Preservation Office and appropriate Native Hawaiian organizations for protection of cultural, historic, and archeological sites. The Service will continue to work with the local community to identify these sites and address their protection during the CCP planning process. The Service is not planning any development in the Refuge expansion area.

Public use and public access. Several commenters expressed interest in fishing in the Refuge expansion area. One commenter requested the Service to maintain and promote recreational fishing in the Kilauea River estuary for Samoan and mango crab, mullet, large mouth bass, shrimp, and o'opu (in the upper reaches).

A few commenters requested the Service to allow the traditional method of catching mullet in the Kilauea River using water slapping to chase mullet into gillnets. Other commenters expressed concerns about gillnet fishing and would like gillnet fishing to be banned. One commenter requested the Service to establish an off-shore marine preserve as part of the Refuge, and ban gillnet fishing in Kilauea River and offshore.

Several commenters were interested in seeing the Service develop an environmental education and interpretation program for the Refuge expansion area using local volunteers in development and implementation of the program.

Many commenters requested unlimited access to Kilauea Falls for the local community. Some people suggested a training program for local volunteers to lead guided interpretative tours to Kilauea Falls. A couple commenters inquired about paid internship opportunities at the Refuge for local people interested in entering careers in wildlife management and related fields. A few people suggested the Service create a trail, as natural as possible, to Kilauea Falls. Several people requested the Service to keep the entire expansion area in a natural state with no bathrooms, fences, or signs advertising the Falls. Others suggested encouraging volunteers to help with habitat restoration in the Kilauea River Valley.

Commenters requested access for swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, and subsistence fishing and gathering including the harvest of fern shoots along the stream. One commenter stated that vehicular access to Kahili Beach (Rock Quarry) is very important to the community, access should be provided via Wailapa Road on the east and Rock Quarry Road on the west but no vehicles on the Beach, and additional parking is necessary.

One commenter stated public bathrooms and parking near the Beach are important, and suggested restricted hours of access (sunup to sundown). One commenter would like access after dark to the dunes and trees next to the Beach. Another commenter requested that motorcycle use be stopped on Parcels 1, 2, 4, and 6. Many commenters disagreed with severely decreased public access to Crater Hill.

Service response. The Service will seek to facilitate fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation, →

Results of Public Review *continued . . .*

compatible with Refuge purposes. These wildlife-dependent uses, and perhaps others, will be evaluated in depth during the CCP planning process. The Service plans to facilitate recreational fishing opportunities consistent with State regulations but it is unlikely commercial enterprises will be allowed. Beach access to surf and swim, and River access to kayak and enjoy waterfowl will be preserved under Service ownership.

The Service will evaluate the harvesting of plants during development of the CCP. We plan to work with community leaders and other interested parties to establish a protocol by which traditional gathering and other culturally related requests may be exercised in a manner that would avoid disturbing sensitive nesting areas. Hikes, guided and unguided, to Kilauea Falls will be considered during development of the CCP.

Even if the Service acquires land within the expansion area, the Service would not have jurisdiction over State-owned Kahili Beach, Kilauea River (as navigable waters under Federal law, Kilauea River is open to the public), Rock Quarry County Road, or the County's public pedestrian easement to Kahili Beach. Federal regulations require all vehicles (motorcycles, ATVs, trucks, cars) driven on any refuge, and all operators, to be licensed and insured as per State regulations, and vehicles are restricted to established roads only. Off road driving is prohibited.

Unrestricted access to Crater Hill was prohibited in the deed. The Refuge, within the last year, has referenced the "donut area" at the end of the paved road thus reopening a portion of Crater Hill for public enjoyment. The Refuge is currently reconstructing the upper overlook and has plans to reopen the Crater Hill hike in 2008.

ATS study and tourism. Several people voiced concern with the ATS Transportation Study, particularly the consideration of buses or trams. One commenter said Refuge neighbors would rather have cars than tour buses on the local roads. Many

people requested the Service to not advertise the Refuge expansion area in order to avoid causing a higher rate of use and congestion negatively impacting wildlife and the community. One commenter requested the Service to avoid making the Refuge a Disneyland with emphasis on t-shirts, coffee cups, booklets, tour guides, controlled hiking paths, law enforcement officers, fences, and signs.

Service response. The Service is interested in minimizing the negative impacts of public visitation to Refuge wildlife and the local community. Alternative solutions to the traffic problems at the Refuge will be addressed in the CCP. Any proposed alternatives should have little to no bearing on the Refuge expansion lands acquired in the Kilauea River Valley because the Service has no intention of directing tourists to the Kilauea River area, from either the existing Refuge, Rock Quarry Road, or Wailapa Road. The Service has no plans to build any structures within the expanded Refuge boundary, except interpretive signs along the trail to the Falls. Refuge boundary signs will be placed along the property lines of newly acquired tracts. The boundary signs will be set back from roads, and will not serve to guide or invite tourists to the Refuge expansion area.

Refuge facilities. One commenter stated that debris from the boat launch area needs to be removed and low spots in Rock Quarry Road where water accumulates must be repaired (on the rock quarry site). The culvert at the top of the Road is plugged and needs to be opened. There also needs to be road improvements, just short of paving, to take the load off Wailapa Road. The boat ramp needs to be repaired as soon as possible.

Service response. The boat launch area has been reopened and boats can launch as they did in the past. The needed road repairs are outside the Refuge expansion boundary and would require a cooperative effort with the road's landowners and affected neighbors. Because the road leads directly to the Refuge's Rock Quarry parking area, the Service would be interested in assisting with road repairs.

Thank you for participating in the planning process for the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge expansion. Please contact us for more information.

Who Do I Contact?

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Address correction requested

In this issue:

A decision to
expand the
Kilauea Point
National
Wildlife
Refuge has
been made.



Visit the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge Website at: <http://pacificislands.fws.gov/wnwr/kauainwrindex.html>